

# **Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Omagh Careers Department**



**Applying to Higher/ Further Education**

**Information for Parents and Students**

**September 2019**

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### **Post 18 Choices**

We now have more Post 18 pathways open to pupils and with tuition fees and increasing living away from home costs and over 50,000 courses on offer it is very important for each student to think carefully about his Post 18 choices.

### **Admissions information and trends for N. Ireland:**

Overall, as expected there were a large number of applicants to courses at QUB and UU, largely because of the lower fees in N. Ireland. This meant that both universities in N. Ireland had very few courses in clearing in Summer 2019 and an extremely small number of students were accepted through clearing for UU or QUB. (There were more places released in engineering and computing related degree courses at Ulster University in August and students who had not met the asking grades or who were applying through clearing were asked to successfully complete a one week bridging course before being accepted onto the course.)

**Many courses at UU and QUB only accepted students who met or exceeded the conditions of their offer.** In fact, where a course was asking for particular grades they rarely even accepted grades that averaged out; i.e. ABC was not accepted in lieu of BBB.

### **Predicted Growth Areas for N. Ireland:**

- Advanced Materials & Engineering e.g. Aerospace, Electrical, Electronics, Automotive, Civil & Renewable
- Financial & Business Services
- Life and Health Sciences e.g. Radiology, nursing
- Creative industries
- Agrifood
- Construction e.g. Surveying

### **Further Information for Parents:**

Universities are keen to help students and their families make the right decisions. UCAS has a specific area on its homepage for parents which provides very useful information [www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/parents-and-guardians](http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/parents-and-guardians) .

QUB & UU host Information Evenings/Sessions for pupils and parents/guardians of prospective students. Please check their websites for specific details.

## Application to UCAS / CAO / St Mary's; HLAs and Foundation Degrees

### Key dates /Timeline

- **18<sup>th</sup> Sept** – deadline for application to sit UKCAT test for entry to Medicine and Dentistry
- **2<sup>nd</sup> October** – deadline for taking UKCAT test for entry to Medicine and Dentistry
- **15<sup>th</sup> Oct** - Deadline for the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and courses in medicine, veterinary medicine/science, and dentistry
- **November 2019** – HPAT Ireland (Medical Admissions test for CAO - Registration opens in early November 2019 and closes on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2020. As capacity in some test centres may be limited, early application for the test is advised.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019 – School Deadline for students to submit UCAS application** (N.B. Applications for Fdn. degree accredited by QUB also need to be made through UCAS by this date.)
- **December 2019** – Applications for St Mary's College Belfast to be submitted before the Christmas holidays.
- **December 2019 - March 2020 approx.** – Interviews for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science
- **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2020**- HPAT admissions tests for entry to Allied Health Profession courses at Ulster University.
- **Mid Feb. 2020** – Interviews for St Mary's, Belfast
- **Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2020** - HPAT Ireland test must be Sat (Medical Admissions test for CAO) Results will be available in late June.
- **31<sup>st</sup> January 2020** deadline for application to CAO undergraduate courses
- **March 2020** – Student Finance applications to be submitted
- **31<sup>st</sup> March 2020** – Students should have heard back from all 5 UCAS choices (N.B. a small number of courses/ universities may not have made all their decisions by this date.)
- **April 2020** – Students considering undertaking a Foundation degree accredited by Ulster university or HLA are advised to apply around this time.
- **1<sup>st</sup> May 2020** - UCAS deadline for making Firm and Insurance choices/ replying to offers received (If students have received all decisions by 31 March). Students who have not heard back from their 5 UCAS choices by 31<sup>st</sup> March will receive a later reply date.

- **13<sup>th</sup> August 2020** - Exam results will be released on this date. Universities will begin to confirm places from this date. Students can check UCAS track from 7.00am on 13<sup>th</sup> August to see if they have been placed on their CF/ CI course.

### **UCAS – University Central Applications System**

The process for applying to a UK university is managed by UCAS. The standard UCAS application fee is approx. £25 and must be made through the school's cashless system before the UCAS form is submitted.

#### **The UCAS Application Form**

There are six elements in the UCAS Application Form:

1. Personal details
2. Qualifications
3. The five course choices (Maximum of four choices for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary).
4. The Personal Statement
5. Employment History
5. The Reference

#### **Course Choices and Entry Requirements**

- UCAS allows students to select up to a maximum of **five** course choices; **NB. four** for Medicine/ Dentistry and Veterinary Science with the fifth choice to be a different course.
- Students can only apply to one course in either Oxford or Cambridge.
- For the more vocational career areas students are normally advised to apply for 5 courses in the same career area and show commitment to that career/subject in their Personal Statement.
- Universities will not actually see your other course choices but will obviously study your Personal Statement very carefully.
- University entry requirements for each course will be given as either Grades or Tariff Points or a combination of both. N.B. Tariff points are listed below:
- At 'A' Level: Grade A\* = 56, A = 48, B = 40, C = 32, D = 24, E = 16 points.
- At 'AS' Level: Grade A = 20 Points, B = 16, C = 12, D = 10, E = 6 points.
- BTEC Diploma Grades - D\*D\* = 112 ; D\*D = 104; DD = 96; DM = 80; MM = 64; MP = 48; PP = 32 points
- BTEC Subsidiary Diploma Grade - D\* = 56; D = 48; M = 32; P = 16 points

- QUB and UU both now ask for Grades across three subjects e.g. BBB and they do not use the tariff point system.
- Some other UK universities still use tariff points. They will often stipulate a minimum grade requirement for 2 A-Level subjects e.g. 120 points to include Grades BB.
- More detailed information on qualifications and entrance requirements may be found on UCAS and individual university websites and students are advised to think carefully and realistically about the asking grades/points before making their 5 choices.
- Students should ensure they check the **online entry profile** to confirm GCSE and Post 16 subject requirements and asking grades/ tariff points for each course they are applying to. N.B. when made an offer based on tariff points students need to confirm through UCAS track if specific grades must be achieved in a particular subject.
- Students are also advised to register for universities' student portal service which will provide a tailored home page for your son based on his career interests and course choices.
- They should talk over their final choices with their subject teachers, parents, careers teacher and the Careers Adviser keeping in mind the grades achieved at AS Level.

### **Selecting a University**

- Think very carefully about selecting which universities you are going to apply to. Check out their reputation in that subject area. ([www.qaa.ac.uk/en](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en), <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/> and [www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk))
- [www.university.which.co.uk](http://www.university.which.co.uk) - The website is a free-to-use, independent source of information and advice to help you find the right degree course and university - featuring a simple-to-use search tool that lets you filter course results on the things that matter most to you, real-life student insights from nearly 300 UK universities and colleges, plus expert advice on everything from applications to student finance.
- Be realistic – are you prepared to live and study at the university for 3 or 4 years?
- Remember the difference in fees here compared to the rest of the U.K.
- Do not be swayed by friends or the prospect of sharing a house with them.
- Discuss university choices with parents, careers teachers, your form teacher and our Careers Adviser.
- Take great care - it is your future career which is at stake.

### **The Personal Statement**

- This is a crucial part of the UCAS application. Course Tutors rely on the information given in the Personal Statement when making decisions.
- The Personal Statement is an opportunity to tell the Course Tutors why you are suited to particular courses and why the university should want you as a student. It is the only opportunity to personalise the application. Use this opportunity to show your commitment and suitability to your chosen courses. The Personal Statement should cover:

- 1) Reasons for your choice of courses and your suitability for these courses. (*Students are normally advised to apply for 5 courses in the same career area and thus show commitment to that career/subject in their Personal Statement*).
- 2) Relevant Experiences of Work.
- 3) School Experiences.
- 4) Outside School Experiences.
- 5) Concluding statement setting out your career ambitions.

All of these should be linked to your course choices, as you want to convince Course Tutors to offer you a place on the course. **NB UCAS will scan Personal Statements for plagiarism.** Avoid copying from another Personal Statement as this will jeopardise your application for degree courses.

**N.B. If a student is completing his Post 16 studies over 3 years, the personal statement must address this and explain why – if this is the case with your son, please ask him to speak to his careers teacher about this.**

#### **The Reference includes:**

- Predicted Grades.
- Attendance.
- Intellectual ability, application, quality of work and promise for future studies - (subject teachers' comments).
- Career aspirations - (relevant experiences of work; research undertaken etc).
- Personal achievements and experiences.
- Personal qualities.
- If a student is completing his Post 16 studies over 3 years the reference must address this – if this is the case with your son, please ask him to speak to his careers teacher about this.

#### **What happens next?**

- Completed Application Form is sent online to UCAS.
- The student will then receive a Welcome Letter from UCAS, stating that his application has been processed. This letter will include an **Personal ID Number**, which should be kept handy in case the student needs to contact UCAS, and a **Password** enabling him to monitor his application using UCAS Track.
- The student waits until he has received a decision from each of his five course choices.

#### **Admissions Staff/ Course Tutors will make:**

- *A Conditional Offer* i.e. an offer of a place on the course on condition the student fulfils certain criteria, usually achieving specific grades or tariff points.
- *An Unconditional Offer* – the applicant has already satisfied the entry criteria and has a place on the course at a particular university. These are normally only made to applicants who have already completed their A2 qualification.
- *A Rejection* – the applicant will not be considered for this particular course choice.

### Firm and Insurance Choices

- Once the student has received all his offers/rejections (if any) from his five course choices, he will have to choose **2** courses, usually by the first week in May.
- One course will be his *Firm Choice* (CF) – the offer the student has accepted as his first choice course. He will be committed to going to this course if he receives the required grades in August.
- A second course will be the student's *Insurance Choice* (CI) - the offer that the student accepts as his second choice course. The Insurance Course should be related to the Firm Offer in career terms and it must be a choice of course the student wants and will accept if he does not receive the grades required for his Firm Offer or First choice course.
- UCAS **Extra** (February–July) allows for one extra choice of course for students who have received **no** offers.
- Students who receive higher A-Level grades in August than required for their Firm choice will be given an **adjustment period** of one week to 'shop around' for alternative courses, if they wish, whilst continuing to hold their Firm choice place.

### CAO & Institutes of Technology - Southern Ireland

- CAO is a separate system for applying to universities in Southern Ireland.
- The closing date is **1<sup>st</sup> February 2020** and cost of application is approximately €40.
- Tuition fees are not charged in the ROI. All students pay a Student Contribution Fee per each year of the course. For the academic year 2019/2020 this is approx. €3,200.
- Students can obtain a student loan to cover the cost of the contribution fee.
- The student applies for up to 10 Degree courses and **the order of preference** is vital as CAO will only make one offer after the A-Level results and will try to place students as near their first choice as possible. For example, if a student is offered their 2<sup>nd</sup> choice course they will not be considered for any of their course choices form 3 to 10.
- Students will need to post confirmation of qualifications achieved and completed to date; e.g. GCSE results.
- No Personal Statement is required for the CAO Form.
- **NB.** BTec qualifications are not accepted by some universities in the South and some high demand courses require 4 A-Level subjects. However, there are many excellent degree courses that are available at the Institutes of Technology throughout Southern Ireland that do accept lower A-Level grades and BTEC courses. (N.B. More detailed information on qualifications and entrance requirements may be found on CAO and individual university websites. See [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)).

### Part-time Degree Courses

An increasing range of degree courses are now being offered on a part-time basis and can be a more affordable option as the fees for these can be paid for by the local education and library board. The **student's** income will be assessed to see if he is eligible to have the cost of his fees reimbursed. However, a much smaller maintenance loan will be available to the student. Application to part-time



degree courses is made directly to the university and will not therefore count as one of your son's five UCAS choices thus keeping more options open to him.

### **Foundation Degrees**

More students are now applying to Foundation degree programmes as a more affordable alternative to embarking directly onto an honours degree. As application to many of these courses is made directly to the college and is not one of a student's five UCAS choices, it can once again keep more options open to your son. (N.B. Application to some Foundation degree programmes must be made through UCAS – this will be noted in the university and college prospectus.)

On completion of their foundation degree at local colleges such as South West College, North West Regional College or Belfast Metropolitan College students may choose to go on to complete the full honours degree at UU or QUB or alternatively go directly into employment. Early application is advised (Spring 2019) as these courses fill up quickly and preference may be given to applicants who applied earlier in the year.

### **Higher Level Apprenticeships**

More and more employers are offering Higher Level Apprenticeships. HLAs offer an excellent alternative to full-time study and are suitable for students who wish to earn as they learn. HLAs include part-time study (1 day per week) at a University or Regional College and 4 days employment within a company. All fees are paid for and students will be paid for their work. On completion of the HLA, a full-time position is usually offered. Examples of employers include, Deloitte (Business/Accounting), Kainos (Software Engineering), Terex, Telstack and Thales (Engineering), to name a few. The regional colleges such as, South West College, also offer a range of HLAs in different subject areas, however the student must secure their own employer before commencing the course.

### **Admissions Tests**

These are required for many courses in Medicine, Dentistry & Veterinary Science. Some Law degrees will also require an admissions test. All the Allied Health courses at University of Ulster require an admissions test. Most courses at Oxford and Cambridge will also require an admissions test.

Information on individual tests and past paper questions can be found on the admissions Testing Service Website: [www.admissionstestingservice.org/](http://www.admissionstestingservice.org/) .

### **UKCAT**

Students intending to apply to **Medicine** or **Dentistry** at most universities must sit **UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT)**.

Registration costs £87 and must be carried out **before 5pm on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019**, although due to high demand, students should register immediately to ensure they get a test slot at their chosen centre. (There is a test centre in Omagh – Anderson House, 41 Market Street, above Grinders Coffee Shop). The test must be taken by **2nd October 2019** and students will receive their results

immediately upon taking the test. Results will also be forwarded to students' chosen universities in November.

See [www.ukcat.ac.uk](http://www.ukcat.ac.uk) for further information.

### **BMAT – Biomedical Admissions Test**

Students intending to apply to Medicine/Dentistry/Biomedical Science at Oxford, Cambridge, University College London, Brighton and Sussex Medical School, Lancaster University, University of Leeds or Imperial College London must sit the BMAT. The entry **deadline is 1<sup>st</sup> October** with the test date being on **2<sup>nd</sup> November**. Results are released on **24<sup>th</sup> November**. See [www.admissionstestingservice.org/for-test-takers/bmat/](http://www.admissionstestingservice.org/for-test-takers/bmat/) for more information and for past papers. Entry fee is approx. £46.

### **HPAT Ireland - Medical Admissions test for CAO**

Applicants to Medicine in NUI Galway, RCSI, Trinity, Cork and UCD will be required to sit the HPAT admissions test. This year the Practice Test with worked solutions is included in the Registration fee which is €130. Further information is available at [www.hpat-ireland.acer.edu.au](http://www.hpat-ireland.acer.edu.au). The test must be sat on **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2020** and Test Centres will be located in Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick, Sligo and Waterford. *As capacity in some test centres may be limited, early application for the test is advised.* Registration opens in early **November 2019** and closes on **19<sup>th</sup> January 2020**. Results are available in **late June 2020**.

### **HPAT – Allied Health Professions Admissions Test (for Ulster University only)**

**N.B. This is a different test from the HPAT-Ireland Medical Admissions test.** The Health Professions Admissions Test (HPAT-Ulster) is used in the selection process by the University of Ulster **only** for entry to the following courses:

***BSc Hons Dietetics, BSc Hons Occupational Therapy, BSc Hons Physiotherapy, BSc Hons Podiatry, BSc Hons Radiography and BSc Hons Speech & Language Therapy***

The test must be taken on **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2020**. *This will be the only opportunity to sit HPAT-Ulster.* Registrations for 2019-19 HPAT will open online at <https://hpat-ulster.acer.org/> at the beginning of **October 2019** and must be made before **3<sup>rd</sup> January 2020**. The test lasts three hours and costs £109. It is divided into three Sections: Critical Reasoning, Interpersonal Understanding and Written Communication, which includes a reflective essay. Results will be released in **late March 2020**. HPAT-Ulster is available at the three Ulster University campuses in Coleraine, Jordanstown and Magee. You will be asked to select your preferred Test Centre when you complete the online registration form.

### **Interviews**

Whilst not all courses invite students to interview our Year 14 students will all undertake interview preparation and mock interview practice as part of their careers programme. If your son is called for interview by a university we would ask him to let his careers teacher know so further individual mock interview practice can be carried out with him. We usually video each student's mock

interview and feedback as students can learn a lot from watching their own performance. If your son would rather not be videoed, we would ask him to let the careers adviser/ his careers teacher know.

### **Finances – Fees and Loans**

The maximum fee for QUB and UU is £4300 approx. per annum for 2019-20 entry. The Executive agreed that tuition fees would be kept at current levels, subject only to inflationary increases. Students from England, Scotland and Wales wishing to study in N.Ireland may be charged up to approx. £9250 by both universities. It is likely that many students from N.Ireland will continue to opt to remain here to complete their degree courses and this has put continuing pressure on asking grades at both our universities. This in conjunction with the reduction in university places at both our universities means it is essential that your son works hard this year to achieve the best grades he is capable of.

Students from N.Ireland who wish to study at universities in England, Scotland\* or Wales will be charged full fees of up to £9250 but will be eligible to borrow the full amount from the student loans company.

*\*Some Scottish universities will offer N.Ireland students a “Lower Fees Status” if they have a valid Irish Passport/ Irish citizenship. However, it is important to note that not all Scottish universities will offer this. If your son is considering applying to university in Scotland, it is strongly advised that he contact the individual university and SAAS (Students Awards Agency Scotland) first to assess his eligibility. Each university will have their own billing/fees procedures.*

- Currently in Northern Ireland, there are no fees for Nursing or the Allied Health Professions e.g. Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Radiography, etc., at QUB or UU.
- Currently students in Northern Ireland studying a Nursing, Allied Health or Social Work course are entitled to a non-repayable bursary.
- Students undertaking a Nursing or Allied Health degree course in England, Scotland or Wales will have to pay full fees and a bursary is no longer available.
- All students, regardless of parental income, are eligible to apply for a Tuition Fee Loan to cover fees. The money will be paid directly to the university.

Students can also apply for a:

- **Maintenance Loan for living expenses** – Max approximately £4,840 if living away from parents’ home and studying outside London; maximum approximately £3,750, if living at home.
- **25% of the maintenance loan is means-tested – all pupils** entitled to 75% of the available loan and parents do not need to disclose any financial information.
- **Maintenance Grant** – maximum approximately £3,475 (is means tested so depends on parental income, non- repayable)

- Student Loans are repayable after graduation on earnings over £15,795 approx.
- On a salary of £22,000 (the average starting salary for a graduate level job) repayments would be approximately £46 per month. Interest is charged at the rate of inflation.
- Students will be given application forms and further advice/details in school during March/April 2020 on the financial support available.

### **Accommodation**

We would recommend students stay in halls of residence for their first year. If you book a place in halls and pay a deposit this will always be refunded to you if you son does not meet the grades required for the course, defers or decides to go to a different university.

Places in halls can be very scarce in the South of Ireland, particularly Dublin, so if applying there, students are advised to put their name on a waiting list at their chosen universities in May/ June of Year 14.

Please see important information below regarding applying for student accommodation at Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University.

#### **Queen's University Belfast**

- Accommodation applications usually open in March.
- Apply online with your UCAS ID: [www.stayatqueens.com](http://www.stayatqueens.com)
- You can apply for accommodation at QUB even if you have chosen QUB as your CI choice.
- No deposit is required at time of applying. You will only be asked for a deposit if you are allocated a room.
- All applications need to be made before 1<sup>st</sup> August but early applications are recommended.
- Places will only be allocated if the student is successful in gaining his place on a course at QUB, i.e. after results day in August.
- On the Monday after the exam results are released (17<sup>th</sup> August 2020) – QUB will start to allocate places to NI students who have got into their course at QUB.
- E: [accommodation@qub.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation@qub.ac.uk) T: +44 (0) 28 9097 4525

#### **Ulster University**

- If you are eligible to apply for Ulster accommodation, then you will be sent an email during the first/second week of May with your 'B' number. If you do not receive this email by the end of May, then you should contact Ulster.
- You can only apply for Ulster, at this stage, if you have made your CF choice with Ulster.
- Apply online using your 'B' number.
- A deposit of £100 is required at the time of application.
- If you do not get the grades you need for Ulster and therefore do not take up your place in halls, the deposit will be returned to you.
- All students who have applied by 7<sup>th</sup> July will be guaranteed a room\*.

- If you are unsuccessful in obtaining your Firm Choice with another university in August, and wish to take up your Insurance Offer with Ulster, then you will need to contact Ulster Accommodation Office ASAP.
- **Jordanstown/Belfast Campus** - Email: [accommodationj@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:accommodationj@ulster.ac.uk) Telephone: [+44 \(0\)28 9036 6239](tel:+44(0)2890366239) / [+44 \(0\)28 9036 6941](tel:+44(0)2890366941)
- **Magee Campus** - Email: [accommodationm@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:accommodationm@ulster.ac.uk) Telephone: [+44 \(0\)28 7167 5758](tel:+44(0)2871675758) / [+44 \(0\)28 716 75757](tel:+44(0)2871675757)
- **Coleraine** - E-mail: [accommodationc@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:accommodationc@ulster.ac.uk) Telephone: [+44 \(0\)28 7012 3271](tel:+44(0)2870123271) / [+44 \(0\)28 7012 4665](tel:+44(0)2870124665)

\*You may not be allocated your first choice room, but you are guaranteed a room.

***N.B.*** Please note that once students have completed and sent their application to the school, the Careers department still have work to do before it can be forwarded to UCAS. You will need to ensure that you have completed your application, made necessary corrections and sent it off by the deadlines set by your Careers Teacher, in order to give enough time for further work to be carried out and so as not to delay the processing of your application by UCAS/Universities.